Written by Bill Schanen IV
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Port council to vote next month on county's proposal to expand parking for center

Port Washington aldermen said Tuesday they want to cooperate with county officials by making West Main Street a one-way street in front of the county Administration Center.

The street proposal, which was introduced to the Common Council Tuesday and will be voted on next month, calls for making the one-block section of Main Street between Milwaukee and Wisconsin streets one-way heading east. That will allow for angle parking on both sides of the street and provide eight additional parking places.

There was no opposition to the plan from aldermen, but two downtown businessmen have raised concerns about the impact on traffic.

Joe Zankl, owner of the Port Hotel & Inn, which is across the street from what would become the one-way road, said he fears a one-way street will make it more difficult for motorists to navigate downtown Port Washington.

"It doesn't make any sense to me. Nobody likes one-way streets," Zankl, who was not at Tuesday's meeting, said earlier. "We should be encouraging people to come to downtown, not making more difficult."

Patrick Poole, owner of Poole Funeral Home, which is on the corner of Main and

Wisconsin streets, has also expressed concerns.

But Ald. Dan Becker, who is also an Ozaukee County supervisor, said the city should cooperate with the county by granting its request for the one-way street.

“The county is a good partner with the city,” he said. “It’s a reasonable request. We’re going to increase parking and that will benefit the funeral home and Port Hotel.”

The county has recently increased its parking space by creating a lot where the old jail once stood on the west side of the Administration Center. County officials, however, said there is still a need for more parking, especially during special events like vaccination clinics held by the Public Health Department and University of Wisconsin Extension programs.

County Administrator Tom Meaux reminded city officials Tuesday that the county sacrificed parking spaces for aesthetics when it constructed its new lot.

“We could have reduced the green space and created more parking, but we opted for more green space. God, do we have green space,” he said. “We have been a good partner with the city.”

City Administrator Mark Grams said the county’s request, which was backed by the city’s Traffic Safety Committee, also benefits the city.

“I’m sure you’ve heard from people about the need for more parking downtown,” he told aldermen. “This would provide for that at no cost to the city.”

The only question aldermen raised was whether the one-way street should run east as planned or west.

Ald. Jim Vollmar said making West Main Street a west-bound road would make sense because the entrance to the road and access to the additional parking would be closer to and easier to access from the heart of downtown. If it become an east-bound street, motorists would have to drive west on Grand Avenue and go around the block to access the street.

But both city and county official said the street should be east-bound so traffic turns right from Main Street onto Wisconsin Street, then onto Grand Avenue at an

intersection controlled by traffic signals. If the street were west-bound, traffic would have to make a left turn on Milwaukee Street and onto Grand Avenue at an intersection not controlled by traffic signals.

MANY OF THE parking places in the Ozaukee County Administration Center parking lot and on West Main Street in Port Washington were full Tuesday afternoon. The county has asked city officials to make West Main Street one way heading east so additional street parking can be created. Photo by Bill Schanen IV